Reviewed and Released
under E.O. 14176, 2025

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY
WASHINGTON

DIRECTOR

June 10, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable
Nicholas deB. Katzenbach
Under Secretary of State

You asked me about the worldwide press reaction on the assassination of Robert Kennedy. The attached report contains details but I want to call your attention to the following themes:

West Europe: Grief and dismay; warm tributes to Kennedy; denunciation of growing violence in America and elsewhere.

Arab Countries: Claims that Sirhan was not a true Arab, having been influenced by his American environment; charges that if he were guilty, he was probably a tool of the Zionists or CIA.

Israel: Sirhan was influenced by Arab leaders who were therefore responsible.

Other Areas: Growing violence is a menace to the U.S. and may spread to other areas; suspicion of conspiracy; compassion for the American people and hope for the future.

Leonard H. Marks

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

LE FIGARO

الجمهورية

Scinteia

Voice of Ethiopia

Ceylon Daily News

RUDE PRAVO

Le Monde

The Japan Times

The Manila Times

Frankfurter Allgemeine

TANJUG

The Times of India

AFRIQUE nouvelle

R(1)F

LA PRENSA

البعث

NEW CHINA NEWS

DAILY EXPRESS

The Daily Mirror

EXCELSIOR

EL PERIODICO DE LA VIDA NACIONAL

The Ethiopian Herald

DIE WELT

আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা

THE YOMIURI

CORRIERE DELLA SERA

MEDIA REACTION ANALYSIS

WORLDWIDE TREATMENT
OF CURRENT ISSUES

June 7, 1968

Office of Policy and Research

ИЗВЕСТИЯ

新華通訊社新聞

HSINHUA DAILY BULLETIN

ŻYCIE WARSZAWY

РАБОТНИЧЕСКО ДЕЛО

БОРБА

الجهاد

L'ESSOR

EL TIEMPO

THE STATESMAN

JORNAL DO BRASIL

The Straits Times

THE WORKING PEOPLE'S DAILY

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

ASSASSINATION OF ROBERT KENNEDY

The magnitude and intensity of media reaction around the world to the assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy is unprecedented in recent years.

In West Europe, newspapers devoted whole sections to the event and its surrounding circumstances. Radio and television gave over great blocks of time to coverage of the story, commentaries, and tributes to the murdered Senator. Voluminous media reaction was also reported from all other areas.

The dominant reactions in the various areas were:

West Europe: Grief and dismay; warm tributes to Kennedy; denunciation of growing violence in America and elsewhere.

Arab Countries: Claims that Sirhan was not a true Arab, having been influenced by his American environment; charges that if he were guilty, he was probably a tool of the Zionists or CIA.

Israel: Sirhan was influenced by Arab leaders who were therefore responsible.

Other Areas: Growing violence is a menace to the U.S. and may spread to other areas; suspicion of conspiracy; compassion for the American people and hope for the future.

Communist Treatment

Moscow radio contended that the U.S. had become "a land of lawlessness and political assassination, a land where a cult of violence is becoming an unwritten constitution.... This violence at home goes hand in hand with violence abroad."

TASS reviewed a Life Abroad article alleging that the assassination was further evidence of the persecution of nonconformists by imperialist ruling circles, and proved "the sinister role played by the FBI and the CIA."

Hanoi radio said "many foreign papers point out that the assassination was part of the plot of U.S. ruling circles to eliminate one another in their race for power." Nhan Dan said that "by freedom the U.S. imperialists obviously only mean licensed murder, licensed exploitation, and licensed aggression."

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

Britain: "Pass Strong Gun Control Law!"

Virtually all British papers condemned the absence of a strong gun control law in the U.S. The independent London Financial Times said today that "the first need, it seems obvious to many Americans and all foreign observers, is to restrict drastically the traditional freedom to carry firearms."

The conservative London Daily Mail contended that there was "a tradition, nay, a glorification, of violence in the U.S." It said "there are no words strong enough to condemn the refusal of the U.S. Congress to pass strict laws controlling the sale of guns."

Today's left-wing Daily Mirror praised the President's announcement of a commission to look into the problem of national violence, adding that Americans "may find some small solace too in the news that the shooting of Robert Kennedy has finally jerked the U.S. Congress into a first move towards tighter control of gun sales."

"Tempted to Turn Away from U.S."

The independent Times of London declared today that "Americans are desperately trying to rediscover faith in their own destiny and institutions. With both Kennedys murdered, some Americans will be tempted to say that their country's institutions are a sham and its destiny a mirage. The rest of the world will be tempted to turn away from America too...

> "The habit of assassination destroys the authority of any country. Americans have huge reserves of intelligence and resource. One of the best things Robert Kennedy did was to remind them of this...
>
> "Certainly America will survive Robert Kennedy's death as it survived his brother's. But the main question for 1968 is now no longer who is to be the next President, but how that survival is to be achieved."

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

"U.S. Usually Civilized and Tolerant"

Many observers contended that violence reflects the failures of advanced industrial societies, irrespective of whether they are American or European, capitalist or Communist.

Yesterday's conservative London Daily Telegraph strongly defended U.S. society. It declared:

> "In few countries of the world are the style and temper of politics usually more civilized, the courtesies of debate more generally observed, opponents more tolerant of each other. That all this should be smirched and obscured by the crimes of a few is unfair...."

Germany: "Violence Not Confined to U.S."

In West Germany, Bonn's center-oriented General-Anzeiger observed yesterday that "Americans are no less and no more inclined toward violence than are other nations." Right-center Handelsblatt of Duesseldorf asserted that "violence and brutality have spread alarmingly" throughout the civilized world.

Munich's left-center Sueddeutsche Zeitung argued that German history "shows the infectious quality of violence.... We should not believe that we have eliminated violence once and for all in this country. Recent events show that this is not so."

West Berlin's independent B. Z. deplored those who condemned all America for Kennedy's death. But independent Spandauer Volksblatt, also of West Berlin, worried that because of violence America's "political and moral credit in the world is slipping through its fingers."

"Strong U.S. Politicians in Danger?"

West Berlin's independent Tagesspiegel wrote:

> "The fact that the murder of Robert Kennedy deprived America of a highly talented young politician makes the political stage appear empty and the future darker. It seems today that every politician may be in danger who develops a strong personal profile and tries to present new ideas to reconcile with deeds the new forces of society."

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

The paper maintained also that the arrested suspect's motives might stem from his Jordanian background:

> "The shots were fired on the anniversary of the Middle East war and, during the election campaign, Robert Kennedy emphatically advocated the Israeli cause."

Today's pro-Christian Democratic Frankfurter Neue Presse carried its Washington correspondent's view that Senator Kennedy's "assassin apparently is a fanatic who hates Israel.... This motivation may increase American opposition to embroilment in foreign problems and prompt further isolationism."

"Profound Sympathy of the French People"

In Paris, today's commentaries in major non-Communist dailies generally did not pursue the conspiracy theme. Gaullist Nation addressed its "saddened condolences" to the Kennedy family, and said:

> "To the American people, so rightly moved and stunned by this tragedy, we express the profound sympathy of the entire French people."

Other papers also expressed a deep sense of loss for a "courageous young statesman" and a feeling that the U.S. is prey to a seemingly incurable epidemic of violence.

Moderately conservative Figaro commented:

> "We wish to express to our American friends how much we share in this tragedy. Beyond the person of the young, brilliant and courageous statesman so brutally shot down, this new tragedy profoundly affects free men, those who believe in democracy, who despise hatred and who are horrified by violence.
>
> "It is with a heavy heart that we bow before a family so cruelly tried and before a great people plunged into sadness and stupor."

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

"Symbolic of Palestinian Hatred"

Independent Le Monde declared that "whether the murderer of Robert Kennedy acted on his own or was the involuntary instrument of a somber conspiracy, the criminal gesture of a Palestinian nationalist on June 5, the anniversary of the 'six-day war,' is highly symbolic ... of the despair and hatred ... among a people who consider themselves robbed of their homeland ...

> "The resolutely pro-Israeli statements of Robert Kennedy during his election campaign, his calls for an intensification of American weapon deliveries to Mr. Eshkol's government, could have exasperated this 24-year-old man who, like many of his former compatriots, only dreams of revenge and 'liberation.'"

Independent-left Combat argued that "it matters little that Robert Kennedy's assassin was not American-born, and it is not in the Middle East that the explanation of that tragedy has to be sought.

> "Even supposing that the murderer acted alone and on his own, which is not proven, everyone knows that forces of violence and intolerance exist in the U.S. ...
>
> "What has to be restored is the sense of civic responsibility. ... This implies that the government should be first to give the example by striving to heal the two cancers that are preying on America: The war in Viet-Nam and the Negro problem.
>
> "Robert Kennedy was aware of that. He had committed himself to that struggle. He died because of it, but what he wanted to say finally will be heard."

Pro-Gaullist Paris-Jour today alleged that "only Robert Kennedy knew the truth about his brother's assassination," and "this is why, before the murder, organs of the far-right designated him as the man to kill, using his positions on Viet-Nam as a pretext."

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

Italy: "Hour of Violence Everywhere"

Italian papers spoke of a "spiral of violence" in the U.S. but many said it was not an exclusively American phenomenon. Milan's leading Corriere della Sera commented yesterday:

> "It is the hour of violence everywhere. In European countries it is expressed, according to tradition, in collective forms .... In America, it is expressed through individuals, as becomes a people of recent pioneer origins."

In Rome, right-of-center Tempo wrote that "the horror and indignation are not directed at the U.S. ... because America, after all, is made of all of us -- Europeans, Asians and Africans .... Therefore, under no circumstances do we Europeans have the right to differentiate ourselves from America, or even worse, to judge her."

Liberal Stampa of Turin declared yesterday that "the reasons for all this violence are to be found in the general atmosphere prevailing in America. ... It is an atmosphere of frustration caused by the enormous contradictions existing in the country. The country of freedom and prosperity is unable to give either to the Negroes."

Austrian, Scandinavian Reaction

Austria's independent Die Presse, Vienna, commented yesterday:

> "The shots that struck down Senator Robert F. Kennedy... have at the same time shaken confidence in those principles which have made America strong: tolerance, respect for the convictions of others, and the freedom to differ without having to risk one's life...
>
> "There is no denying that much of the goodwill America has been laboriously building up throughout the world has been shot to pieces."

In Norway, Oslo's Radical Liberal Dagbladet observed that "if there is something sick" in American society, "such a sickness will also affect the rest of the world because the U.S. with its power and influence does much to determine our future."

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

Cairo: "Sirhan a Product of U.S. Atmosphere"

Arab media ordinarily critical of the U.S. as a community of violence concentrated instead on discussing the arrested suspect. Facts of the arrest were admitted, but the concept emerged that if Sirhan were a "Palestinian" he was not truly an Arab in spirit. Some speculated that he was part of a Zionist or CIA plot.

Cairo's semi-official al-Ahram said today:

> "The murder of Senator Kennedy is a dreadful tragedy in every way. However, we must make two points:
>
> "1. The Palestinian youth, Sirhan Bishara, who is accused of the murder, is a product of the atmosphere of crime in the U.S. He left his Arab homeland 11 years ago when he was 12. This means that he spent his formative years in the U.S.
>
> "2. It is rather painful to say this, but it is a fact that American discrimination against the Arabs is taxing people's nerves, particularly the nerves of Arab immigrants in the U.S. Robert Kennedy's slayer is therefore a product of the violence that characterizes American life and of discrimination against a people's cause."

Jordan: "No Sane Arab Would Support the Crime"

Amman's government-controlled ad-Dustour said today "it is hard to understand the motives behind Sirhan B. Sirhan's shooting of the young Senator." It added that "Arab morals reject a policy of assassination, no matter what the justification... anti-Arab propaganda media will try to use this terrible incident to deepen the gap of doubt and misunderstanding between the Arab and American nations.

> "No sane Arab would support the crime.... Americans are called upon to ponder and analyze the motives.... Then they will discover that we both are the victims of the Zionist movement which is conspiring against both the Arabs and the Americans."

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

Syria: "Arabs Do Not Benefit"

Damascus' ruling party organ al-Baath said today that the "Arabs do not benefit from the assassination of any U.S. politician." It stated that "reports that the person who shot Kennedy is an Arab should be read with great caution.... Even if this person actually shot Kennedy, the fact is that ruling circles used him."

The paper declared that both Kennedy brothers were "victims of the struggle among various U.S. monopolistic interests," and "the aim behind the attempt to involve the Arabs was to conceal the true reasons for the assassination and give anti-Arab circles food for propaganda."

Lebanon: "Arab in Name Only"

Beirut's independent conservative al-Jarida expressed a hope that "the killer is Arab in name only...otherwise the consequences of this barbaric act will not be in the interest of any Arab cause now or in the future." Pro-West al-Hayat said:

> "It is inconceivable that a sound Arab would assassinate a foreign political leader, particularly Robert Kennedy. Assassination itself is in contradiction to Arab magnanimity. ... Besides, this ugly crime... could be very harmful to the Arabs, particularly at this time when American and world public opinion has started to shift to our side."

Pro-UAR al-Muharrir said U.S. intelligence "is probably behind" the crime "out of fear" that Robert Kennedy might have become President and might have opened the files to "reveal the true assassins" of President Kennedy.

Algiers: "Tool of Zionists and CIA?"

Algiers radio said there are "attempts to depict the killer as a fanatic patriot," but it asked: "Could not Sirhan be a professional killer financed and armed by Zionists in an attempt to incite world opinion against the Arabs and to create hysteria in the U.S. regarding the Arabs?"

The radio also broadcast a statement by the Algiers Office of the Palestinian Liberation Movement which concluded:

> "If it is established after investigation that the killer is an Arab

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

national, he must have been a tool of world Zionism and those with similar political interests, including the CIA with all its wealth and power which are used for cheap and evil political purposes."

Israel: "Arabs Responsible for Crime"

Tel Aviv's independent Yediot A'Haronot said the murder "is part of the same war in which Israeli women and children have been murdered year after year, a war which has now reached the U.S."

The paper declared that the U.S. has learned, and the Soviet Union may learn "that it is impossible to encourage murderers with money and arms on the assumption that they will only kill Jews in Israel."

Tel Aviv's independent Maariv saw "a plague of violence" spreading through U.S. society. It declared that responsibility for the crime by "the young incited Arab in California must rest on the shoulders of Arab leaders and Arab propaganda and boycott agencies..."

India: "So Many Fanatical Groups"

Grieving editorials in India's major papers described earlier U.S. assassinations and spoke of "increasing violence" in the U.S.

The pro-West Times of India of Bombay and New Delhi said:

> "There must be something radically wrong with a society which at the peak of prosperity harbors so many fanatical groups.... Viet-Nam has divided the country as never before...
>
> "The widespread unrest on the campuses, the anti-draft movement, the enormous growth in the number of people who have opted out of society and entirely rejected its values, the widespread search... for some means of escape from all this madness are reminders that the American dream has gone sour."

The pro-West Indian Express of Bombay said "the right to bear arms has been perverted into license for private violence."

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

Japan: "U.S. Defects Not Fatal"

In Japan, independent-liberal Asahi reported that this was the first time that "such large numbers of Americans were driven to despair at the condition of U.S. society." It said violence appeared to be "deep-rooted in American society."

Financial-conservative Sankei attributed the tragic event to racial problems and discontent among the poor. It emphasized, however, that "these defects are not fatal to American democracy," and expressed hope that "the U.S. will overcome its social and economic ills with the strength of its democratic tradition."

Korean Sympathy

In South Korea, papers today played stories of the Los Angeles police seeking a woman accomplice. They said the search destroyed the idea that no conspiracy was involved. Editorials expressed shock. Earlier, most called for prayers for Senator Kennedy's recovery.

Almost all editorials were understanding and warm in tone. At the same time many expressed concern about violent events in American life, and affirmed that "we sincerely hope our ally the U.S. will recover peace and order out of social unrest" (leading Donga Ilbo, Seoul).

Manila papers expressed sympathy and confidence that the American people would solve their domestic problems. Papers stressed Mr. Kennedy's concern for minorities and the poor.

Grief in Australia

Australian papers expressed grief and compassion. They quoted President Johnson's statements at length and hoped the sense of shock would put an end to violence.

The independent Melbourne Age feared that "there may be worse to come. ... In America, assassination is the likely fate of men who embrace great causes, who stand up and speak out for what they believe to be right and true."

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

Mexico City: "Shock, Sympathy, Consternation"

Moderate Ultimas Noticias attempted to present "a consensus" of Mexican reaction:

> "Sympathy for the Kennedy family and admiration for their heroism, indignation over the assassination, consternation over the climate of violence, and the conviction that it was the act of one delinquent individual."

Elsewhere, the violence theme predominated and the assassination was widely ascribed to a conspiracy of undefined direction.

Moderate Novedades in the same city asserted that "Robert Kennedy's assassination confirms the diagnosis of a sick society."

El Salvador's center-left El Mundo charged that "violence, like a rabid dog, again stalks the streets of North America seeking out free men who offer a little hope for a better world."

In Costa Rica, conservative La Nacion observed "signs of a deep, persistent decomposition of the most profound bases of life in the U.S." and questioned whether "that ominous flame might spread" to Latin America.

Lima: "Uprooting of American Values"

Peru's leading, conservative El Comercio said "worldwide reaction repudiates the violence which seeks to uproot the sentiments which the leaders of North America profess for justice, democracy, and peace."

Nationalist Expresso of the same city voiced the dominant theme of comment by Peru's leading politicians -- the charge that the assassination was the product of a conspiracy. The paper professed to see "vast Mafias, and the psychological effects of three wars" as the cause.

Buenos Aires: "200 Million Not at Fault"

Buenos Aires' conservative La Nacion, unlike other Latin American papers, declared:

> "It would be a malevolent mistake to assume that a nation of 200 million can be judged by the behavior of a small group of hot-heads."

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

Africa: "Will Bullets Stop Ballots?"

Throughout Africa, editorials mourned the death and condemned American society, with frequent references to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.

Addis Ababa's Ethiopian Herald, usually pro-U.S., called the crime "repulsive" and said "it is a sad commentary that bullets are being used as a means of expressing political opposition...

> "This is a moment for soul-searching by Americans. Will bullets stop ballots?"

The Amharic-language Addis Zemen, the official government paper, said recent political crimes in the U.S. were against men who tried to "improve American social conditions." It declared that Martin Luther King "fought for equality and dignity for his race" while Senator Kennedy, as Attorney General, "backed the rights of Negroes."

Nairobi's Daily Nation said:

> "Can there be liberty without security? If America's leaders are to be struck down, if one bullet can destroy the achievement of a million ballots, can anybody say that America is safe for democracy?"

Kampala's pro-West Luganda-language Munno asked:

> "What is really happening to the U.S., a vast and civilized nation? This is the question one would ask after the shooting of President Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King and now Senator Kennedy."

Lagos' New Nigerian called Senator Kennedy a "champion of racial integration" and added that "everyone who has attempted to free America from intellectual blindness and racial bigotry has been rewarded with assassin's bullets."

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176